

Social grievances thus commingled with religious zeal and political motives in producing a reaction which the regent was plainly impotent to control. In the presence of this welling up of popular anger, all her shifts, whether of force or negotiation, were doomed to failure. She tried the language of intimidation in vain. " In despite of you and your ministeris , baith," protested she angrily to the Lords of the Congregation, " they shal be banished owt of Scotland, albeit they preached as trewlie as ever did Sanct Paule." The delegates of the lords reminded her of her former professions of toleration. " It became not subjectis/" was the snappish retort, " to burden thare princes with promises farther than it pleaseth them to keape the same.³¹ In pursuance of this threat, she summoned the preachers once more, this time to Stirling (May 1559). Again they indicated their willingness to appear, but, as before, their adherents assembled in such numbers at Perth for the purpose of accompanying them that she waived the citation and then proclaimed them outlaws for their non-appearance. The news of this trick was carried by Erskine of Dim to Perth, where John Knox had arrived on his final return from Geneva, and was inveighing might and main, in spite of outlawry, against " idolatry/" Under the inspiration of his eloquence, " the Beggars " were not slow to put their threat to execution, with the result that the images of the Church of St John were smashed, and the monasteries of the Black and Grey Friars and the Charterhouse Abbey sacked and burned (nth May 1559)- With this practical application of the Beggars' Summons the trial of strength between the two parties began in earnest. In twelve months the French alliance and the old Church had disappeared. Short as was the interval, it was brimful of dramatic vicissitude—of check and countercheck by the party of the Congregation and the party of the regent.

To the regent the action of the Perth populace was rebellion as well as sacrilege. Its leaders disclaimed the charge of sedition, but they protested in a letter, written apparently by Knox, that, unless liberty of conscience and worship were granted, they would not hesitate to defend themselves and their cause by force of arms. " Except this crueltie be stayed by your wisdome, we wil be compelled to tak the sweard of